

T H E
P A R A B L E
O F A
P I L G R I M.

TAKEN FROM AN
Ancient SPIRITUAL WRITER.



B A T H :

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T H E

P A R A B L E, &c.

1.  HERE was a man that had a great desire to go to *Jerusalem*; and because he knew not the right way, he addressed himself for advice to one that he hoped was not unskilful in it; and asked him if there was any way passable thither? The other answered, the way was both long, and full of very great difficulties: yea, that there were many ways that seemed, and promised to lead thither, but the uncertainty and danger of them were too great. Nevertheless, one way he knew, which, if diligently pursued, according to the directions and marks that he would give, might be safely travelled, and went strait thither. Not, says he, that I can promise thee a security from many frights, beatings, and other ill usage, and also temptations of all kinds. But if thou canst have courage and patience enough to suffer them, without quarrelling, resisting, or troubling thyself, and pass on, having this only in thy mind, and sometimes on thy tongue; I HAVE NOUGHT: I AM NOUGHT: I DESIRE NOUGHT, BUT TO BE AT JERUSALEM: My life for thine, thou shalt escape safe with thy life, and in a competent time arrive at that city.

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2. The Pilgrim, overjoyed with this news, answered, So I may have my life safe, and may at last come to the place that I above all things only desire, I care not what miseries I suffer in my way. Therefore let me know only what course I am to take, and, God willing, I will not fail to observe carefully your directions. The Guide replied, Since thou hast so good a will, though I myself never was so happy to be in *Jerusalem*, yet be confident, that by the instructions I shall give thee, if thou wilt follow them, thou shalt come safe to thy journey's end.

3. Now the advice that I am to give thee in brief is this. Before thou set the first step into the highway that leads to *Jerusalem*, thou must be firmly grounded in the love of God, and faith in JESUS CHRIST; moreover, whatsoever sins thou findest in thy conscience, thou must seek to purge them away by hearty sincere repentance. This being done, begin thy Journey in God's name; but be shure to go furnished with two necessary instruments or companions; namely, Humility and Charity: both which will unite in the before mentioned speech, which must always be ready in thy mind: I AM NOUGHT: I HAVE NOUGHT: I DESIRE BUT ONE ONLY THING, AND THAT IS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND TO BE WITH HIM IN PEACE AT JERUSALEM. the meaning and virtue of these words therefore thou must have continually, at least in thy thoughts, either expressly or virtually. Humility says, *I am nought: I have nought.* Love says,

I desire nought but JESUS CHRIST. These two companions thou must never part from; neither will they willingly be separated from one another; for they accord very lovingly together: and the deeper thou groundest thyself in humility, the higher thou raisest thyself in charity: for the more thou seeest and feelest thyself to be nothing but a worm, with the more fervent love wilt thou desire CHRIST, that by him, who is ALL, thou mayst become something that may be acceptable to God.

4. Now this same Humility is to be exercised, not so much in considering thy own self; thy sinfulness, and thy misery (although to do this at the very first be good and profitable) but rather in a quiet, loving sight of the infinite, endless being, and goodness of God, in his Son JESUS CHRIST. The which beholding of God's love, must be either through grace, in a feeling knowledge of CHRIST formed in thee, in the new birth; or at least in a full and firm faith in him. And such a beholding, when thou shalt attain to it, will work in thy mind a far more pure, spiritual, solid, and perfect humility, than the former way of beholding thyself; the which produces an humility more gross, boisterous and unquiet. For by seeing the love of God in JESUS CHRIST, thou wilt both see, and feel thyself not only to be the most wretched filthy creature in the world, but also in the very substance of thy soul (setting aside the foulness of thy actual sins) to be nothing but a meer worm: for truly in and
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of thyself, and without JESUS CHRIST, who really and in truth is all that is acceptable to God, thy soul is a horrible image. And until thou receive the image of CHRIST, and feel thou hast his love, (notwithstanding thou hast done, to thy own thinking, never so many good deeds) yet in truth thou hast nothing for thy comfort; for nothing will abide of good in thy soul, and satisfy it, but the love of GOD in CHRIST. Therefore cast all other things behind thee, and forget them; that thou mayst have that which is best of all. And by thus doing, thou wilt become a true Pilgrim, that leaves behind him houses, and wife, and children, and friends, and goods, and makes himself poor, and bare of all things, that he may go on his journey lightly, with joy, and without hinderance.

5. Well now thou art in thy way, travelling towards *Jerusalem*; the which travelling consists in working inwardly, and (when need is) outwardly too, such works as are suitable to thy condition and state, and such as will help and increase in thee this gracious desire that thou hast to be united to CHRIST in *Jerusalem*. Let thy works be what they will, thinking, or reading, or preaching, or labouring, &c. if thou findest they draw thy mind from worldly vanity, and confirm thy heart and will more to the love of CHRIST, it is good and profitable for thee to use them. And if thou findest that through custom such works do in time lose their favour, and virtue to increase this love, and that it seems to thee that thou feelest more grace

and spiritual profit in some other; take these others, and leave those: for, though the inclination and desire of thy heart to CHRIST must ever be unchangeable, nevertheless thy works that thou shalt use in thy manner of praying, reading, &c. to the end to feed and strengthen this desire, may well be changed, according as thou feelest thyself by grace disposed in the applying of thy heart. Bind not thyself therefore unchangeably to voluntary customs, for that will hinder the freedom of thy heart to love CHRIST, if grace should visit thee in a special manner.

6. Before thou hast made many steps in the way, thou must expect a world of enemies; of several kinds, that will set thee round about; and all of them will endeavour busily to hinder thee from going forward; yea, if they can by any means, they will either by persuation, flattery, or violence, force thee to return home again to those vanities thou hast forsaken: for there is nothing grieves them so much, as to see a resolute desire in thy heart to love CHRIST, and to travel to find him; therefore they will all conspire to put out of thy heart that good desire and love, in which all virtues are comprised.

7. Thy first enemies to assault thee will be fleshly desires, and vain fears of thy corrupt heart, and with these will join unclean spirits, that with subtil temptations will seek to allure thy heart to them, and to withdraw it from JESUS: but whatsoever they say, believe them not; but betake thyself to thy old, only, secure remedy, answering

swering always thus ; *I am nought : I have nought : and I desire nothing but the love of GOD in CHRIST :* and so hold forth in thy way, desiring CHRIST only.

8. If they endeavour to put dreads and scruples into thy mind, and would make thee believe thou hast not repented as thou ought for thy sins, but that some old sins remain in thy heart not yet repented of, and that therefore thou must return back to repent of those sins, before thou hast the boldness to go to GOD in the merits of CHRIST. Do not believe a word of all that they say ; for by thy sincere repentance, the blood of CHRIST has cleansed thee from thy sins ; and there is no need at all that thou shouldst stay to ransack thy conscience, for this now will do thee harm, and either put thee quite out of thy way, or at least unprofitably delay thy travelling in it.

9. If they shall tell thee, that thou art not worthy to have the love of GOD, nor to see CHRIST : and therefore that thou ought not to be presumptuous to desire and seek after CHRIST ; believe them not, but go on, and say, It is not because I am worthy, but because I am unworthy of GOD's love, that I desire to find CHRIST who is worthy : and who will, by uniting my soul to himself, make me worthy. I will therefore never cease desiring to be united to CHRIST, until I have obtained it. For it was for that union only that my soul was created ! therefore, say and do what you will, I will desire it continually ; I will never cease to pray for it ; and by so doing, I hope, through GOD's mercy to obtain it.

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10. If thou meetest with any that seem friends to thee, and that in kindness would stop thy progress, by entertaining thee, and seeking to draw thee to sensual mirth, by vain discourses and carnal solaces, whereby thou wilt be in danger to forget thy pilgrimage; give a deaf ear to them, answer them not: think only on this, *that thou wouldst fain be at Jerusalem.* And if they proffer thee gifts and preferments, heed them not, but think ever on *Jerusalem.*

11. And if men despise thee, or lay any false calumnies to thy charge, giving thee ill names: or if they go about to defraud thee, or rob thee: yea, if they beat thee and use thee despitefully and cruelly; for thy life contend not with them: strive not against them, nor be angry with them: But content thyself with the harm received, and go on quietly as if nought was done, that thou take no father harm. Think only on this; that to be at *Jerusalem* deserves to be purchased with all this ill usage, or more; and that there thou shalt be sufficiently repaired for all thy losses, and recompenced for all hard usages by the way.

12. If thine enemies see that thou grow courageous and bold, and that thou wilt neither be seduced by flatteries, nor disheartened with the pains and troubles of thy journey, but rather well contented with them, then they will begin to be afraid of thee: yet for all that they will never cease pursuing thee, they will follow thee all along the way, watching all advantages against thee; and ever and anon they will

will set upon thee, seeking, either with flatteries or frights, to stop thee, and drive thee back if they can. But fear them not; hold on thy way, and have nothing in thy mind but *Jerusalem*, and JESUS CHRIST, whom thou wilt find there.

13. If thy desire of CHRIST still continues, and grows more and more strong, so that it makes thee go on thy way courageously; they will tell thee that it may very well happen that thou wilt fall into corporal sickness; and perhaps such a sickness as will bring strange fancies into thy mind, and melancholy apprehensions; or perhaps thou wilt fall into great want, and no man will offer to help thee: by occasion of which misfortunes thou wilt be grievously tempted by thy ghostly enemies, who will then insult over thee, that thy folly and proud presumption has brought thee to this miserable pass, that thou canst neither help thyself, nor will any man help thee, but rather hinder those that would. All this they will do, to the end that they may increase thy melancholy and unquiet apprehensions; or to provoke thee to anger, or malice against thy Christian brethren, or to murmur against God; for perhaps CHRIST may, for thy trial, seem to hide his countenance from thee; but still resist these suggestions, and be as though thou heard'st them not. Be angry with nobody, and in all thy diseases, poverty, and whatsoever sufferings (for who can reckon all) that may befall thee, keep JESUS CHRIST in thy mind; think on the lesson that he has taught; and go on saying, *I am nought: I have*

have nought: I care for nought in this world: I desire nought but the love of GOD in CHRIST: and to be united to him, and dwell in peace at Jerusalem.

14. But if it shall happen sometimes, as likely it will, that through some of these temptations, and thy own frailty, thou stumble and perhaps fall down and get some harm thereby; or that thou for some time wander a little out of the right way: get up again as soon as possibly may be, come again into thy inward man, and return into the right way. Do not trouble thyself overmuch, or too long with thinking upon thy past misfortune, for that will do thee more harm, and give advantage to thy enemies. Therefore repent, take more care, and make hast to go on in thy journey and working again, as if nothing had happened. Keep but CHRIST in thy mind, and desire to gain the love of GOD in him, and none shall be able to hurt thee.

15. At last when thy enemies perceive, that thy desire to be united in CHRIST is so strong, that thou wilt not regard either poverty, mischief, sickness, malencholy doubts, nor fears; life nor death; but will go on in desire of that one thing needful, the obtaining of GOD's love in CHRIST, and will be satisfied with nothing else. That thou despisest all earthly things, and hold on praying for the assistance of GOD's holy Spirit, and with submission and resignation to the divine will: then they will grow enraged and spare no manner of cruel usage, they will come closer to thee than they ever did before, and betake themselves to their

their last and most dangerous assault; that is, they will bring into the sight of thy mind, all thy good deeds and virtues, shewing that men praise thee, and love thee, and bear thee great veneration for thy holiness, &c. and all this they will do to the end to raise vain joy, and pride in thy heart. But if thou desirest thy life in CHRIST, thou wilt hold all this flattery, and falsehood, to be a deadly poison to thy soul mingled with honey: therefore away with it, cast it from thee, saying thou wilt have none of it, and that thy desire is to be at *Jerusalem*.

16. And to the end to put thy soul out of the danger and reach of such temptations, suffer not thy thoughts willingly to run about the world, but draw them all inward, fixing them upon CHRIST only, to think only on him, to possess him, to love him. And after thou hast brought thyself to do thus, then whatsoever thou seest, or feelst inwardly, that is not him, will be unwelcome and painful to thee; because it will stand in thy way of seeing him, and of enjoying his presence whom thou only desirest.

17. But yet if there be any work or outward business which thou art obliged to do, or that charity, or present necessity requires of thee, either concerning thyself, or thy brother, fail not to do it, dispatch it as well, and as soon as thou canst, and let it not tarry long in thy thoughts, for it will but hinder thee in thy principal business. but if it be a matter of no necessity, or that concerns thee not in particular, trouble not thyself,

self, nor distract thy thoughts about it; but get rid of it quickly out of thy heart, saying still thus: *I am nought: I can do nought: I have nought: and nought do I desire, but only to live in JESUS CHRIST, and be at Jerusalem.*

18. Thou wilt be forced, as all other Pilgrims are, to take often times by way of refreshments, meat and drink, and sleep, yea, and sometimes innocent recreations; in all which things use discretion, and take heed of foolish scrupulosity.

19. To conclude: remember always that thy principal aim, and indeed only business is, to be united to CHRIST. To strengthen this desire daily by prayer for the assistance of God's holy Spirit, and by other spiritual workings, to the end it may never go out of thy heart. And whatsoever thou findest proper to increase that desire of being united to CHRIST, be it by praying or reading, speaking or being silent, travelling or reposing, make use of it for the time, as long as thy soul finds favour in it, and as long as it increases this desire of having and enjoying nothing but the love of God in CHRIST, and being with him in true peace in *Jerusalem*: and be assured, that this good desire thus cherished, and continually increased will bring thee safe unto the end of thy pilgrimage.

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